

Edwards: 2010 Homeland Security Bill Reverses \$10.1 Million in Cuts Proposed by White House for Vital A&M First Responder Program

(Washington, DC)- U.S. Representative Chet Edwards announced that \$10.1 million in cuts proposed by the White House Office of Management and Budget for the National Emergency Response and Rescue Training Center (NERRTC) at Texas A&M University have been rejected. The program will be fully funded at \$23 million under the 2010 Homeland Security Appropriations bill, which passed the House Wednesday 389 to 37.

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"I am pleased to report that I have been able to stop \$10.1 million in cuts proposed by the White House Office of Management and Budget for the National Emergency Response and Rescue Training Center (NERRTC) at Texas A&M University. The program will now be fully funded at \$23 million," said Edwards. "Despite the fact that the NERRTC is an effective program that trains emergency first responders from across the nation, bureaucrats at the White House continue to try to drastically cut their funding. It doesn't make sense. Our police, firefighters and EMS personnel must be well-trained to respond to terrorist attacks or natural disasters."

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Dr. G. Kemble Bennett, vice chancellor and dean of Texas A&M Engineering, said, "In its eleven years of operation, NERRTC has provided essential and advanced level training to more than 284,000 emergency responders from all 50 states, territories and the District of Columbia. The American public is better protected today than ever before from those who would do us harm through the preparedness of our emergency responders and I applaud the foresight of Congressman Chet Edwards for his continued support of this crucially important program."

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Restoring funding for the program to \$23 million is an increase of 44% above the level the White House Office of Management and Budget sought, proposal which would have resulted in the loss of 50 jobs at NERRTC and prevented 20,000 state and local emergency responders from receiving training.

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Over 40,000 police, firefighters, and EMS personnel come from across the country every year to receive first responder training at the National Emergency Response and Rescue Training Center (NERRTC) at Texas A&M in College Station. NERRTC funding has been singled out as a top public policy priority by the Texas A&M system. As a senior member of the Appropriations, Edwards strongly supported the restoration of the funding and will shepherd it the throughout the legislative process.

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"Texas A&M is a national leader on homeland security research and training and this important funding is crucial for the safety of our citizens," said Edwards. "There should be no greater priority of the federal government than to protect Americans here at home from the threat of terrorism."

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The bill must still pass the Senate and be signed by the President.

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